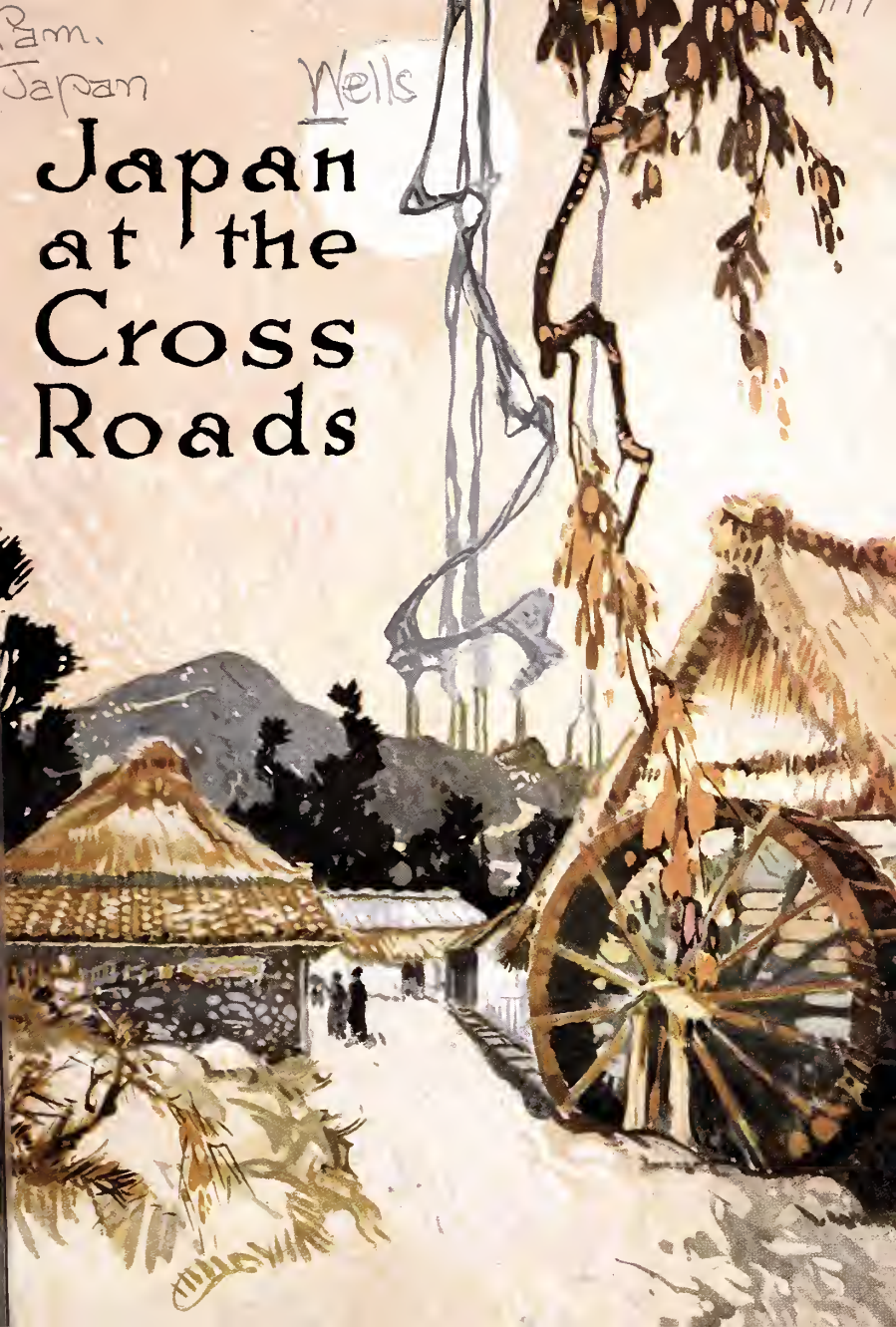



Sam.  
Japan

Wells

# Japan at the Cross Roads





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# JAPAN AT THE CROSSROADS

FLORENCE WELLS

ISSUED BY  
FOREIGN DEPARTMENT  
NATIONAL BOARD  
YOUNG WOMENS CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS  
600 Lexington Avenue  
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# JAPAN

## AT THE CROSSROADS

JAPAN is in a condition of real peril to-day. While her population has increased at a normal rate, she has not been able to increase food production fast enough to keep up. In fact, her farmers have terraced the hills to their tops, they have planted beans on the ridges that separate the rice fields, they have raised superior rice and sold it to buy a larger quantity of poorer quality. Even if they should save the 13,000,000 bushels of rice which annually goes to make *sake* (wine) still there would not be enough rice in Japan for her 57,785,397 people.

### *Between Scylla and Charybdis*

Some time ago Japan's troubled leaders faced the fact that the soil could not feed the people, so they turned to commerce and manufacture. One Island Empire had solved her problem thus, —why not another? So Japan went at the task

with the same decision and thoroughness which have characterized her efforts for the past sixty years, with never a thought of possible misunderstandings on the part of other countries, and with never a premonition that modern business could not be grafted upon her ancient patriarchal system.

She has sent her men everywhere studying demand and seeking raw materials. Other countries have not always approved her methods of obtaining supplies, but even here we must confess that she is imitative and not inventive. She has shown us nothing new in the way of "getting a corner" on a desirable market.

When substitutes for butter and flour were needed thousands of Japanese went to Manchuria and raised soy beans, thousands of men and women worked in the factories and offices where the beans were converted into oil and flour, and thousands of women helped coal the ships that brought the oil and flour to the United States. Some of the oil went into explosives that helped win the war.

Away up in the north of Japan a coal mine has been discovered. It is not an inexhaustible supply. This fact has led to a trip to Sweden, where the finest steel in the world is made with

the smallest machinery and a minimum of fuel. A smaller quantity of first-class steel, in such form as needles and watch springs, is the aim of this new enterprise, so that iron need not be imported in such large quantities.

Established manufactures and industries need hardly be mentioned. Everyone is familiar with the silk, tea, toys, brushes and novelties. We have come to depend on Japan for these things as well as for iodine, camphor, and peppermint.

### *Woman's Point of Interest*

That, however, which interests us as members of the Y. W. C. A. is the effect on women of this remarkably swift transformation of Japan from an agricultural nation sufficient unto itself to an industrial nation inextricably woven into the fabric of world affairs.

Wages have advanced at the rate of the proverbial snail while prices of necessities have worn seven-leagued boots. More members of the family have been obliged to turn time into cash, and it is still customary to give the better chance to the boys; so we find the colleges full of men and the working world full of women and girls.

Close to 70% of factory workers are female operatives. Their employers have not yet learned that the quantity and quality of their output depends upon rest, recreation, ventilation and proper food. Consequently the workers are driven at full speed, twelve to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, two holidays a month. They become sick, discouraged and desperate and leave before they have become efficient. Most of them are housed in dormitories so crowded that day shifts and night shifts use the same unaired beds month on end.

### *Girls Crave a Fuller Life*

When the supply of help gets low—through desertion, sickness, and death—a silver-tongued orator is sent out to get recruits from among the credulous folk of some mountain village. When the Y. W. C. A. can establish town and county work in those places the factory agents will not so easily beguile the girls with alluring pictures of big wages, charming dormitory life, and wonderful chances for a good time in the city factory.



## *Leaders Ask Our Help*

Many Japanese leaders are realizing that the strength of Japan's future motherhood is being sapped and the vitality of the race is deteriorating. They are dazed by the suddenness and the enormity of this overwhelming problem. Strikes and labor agitations are rife in Japan, and with more righteous reason than in our own land. They are looking for help to us and other nations that are dealing with similar problems. Many factory owners have offered unlimited opportunity to the Y. W. C. A. to come in and set up welfare programs.

The Japanese Government has offered scholarships in sociology in institutions of higher education to students who will pledge two years to social service for the government after graduation. Such a scholarship is held by a girl in the new Women's Christian College in Tokyo.

## *One Aspect of the Health Question*

In a recent Japanese magazine the house question was discussed from the point of view of health. In very ancient days people did not sleep and eat and work on the floor. Very crude furni-

ture was in use. Later for ideal and practical reasons architecture took on its present form and beds and chairs were abandoned.

The ideal reason? "Life is evanescent, the soul leaves the body, no other soul comes to inhabit the body. What is a house? It is the body which contains that compound soul known as a family. Each family should have its own house, and when the family ceases to exist the house should be consigned to the spirit realm by fire." Of course this practice has long since ceased owing to the poverty of Japan.

The practical reason? Earthquakes, typhoons, and conflagrations which devastate whole villages and cities. Owing to the danger of destruction the buildings are made as cheap and small as possible. Most people lack capital to invest in indestructible stone walls and tile roofs.

For fear of burglars and the bad air from the paddy fields Japanese houses are shut air-tight at night. In poorer homes the quilts are often laid out for the family as close as bricks in a chimney. The thick straw mats which cover the floors are excellent incubators of germs.

The Japanese are quite ready for a health campaign. Dr. Inouye, who has been attending

the International Conference of Women Physicians, said "I want to make my country know all the things about good health; we want to have a health campaign. Many women doctors can help, but we don't know how to do that campaign. Can the Y. W. C. A. lend us secretaries who will teach us how to lead in those big public programs?"

Our concern in Japan is not only for healthy houses, but for safe houses. In ever increasing numbers girls are flocking to the cities for business and study. The Y. W. C. A. with its three small dormitories in Tokyo has made scarcely an impression on the great need. It is hardly believable that in the largest shipping port in Asia a young girl slept in the graveyard three nights, because she was afraid and she didn't know whom to ask about lodgings. In this same city of Kobe a girl was living in her employer's dormitory, the only girl in the house. These cases are not exceptional. They emphasize one more opportunity to help the women of Japan.

We might mention the needs of American girls in business in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Kobe. We might mention the timid little brides leaving Nippon for strange homes in the United States. Each presents its problem to the Y. W. C. A.

We might speak of the capacity of Japanese women for leadership. We might speak of nurses, doctors, teachers—women in professions. Whichever way we turn they are asking us to help them. Extension classes in Bible, Singing, Business, Physical Education are sought with eager popularity. They want to know in order to tell others.

It was white man's war against white man that accentuated and turned the spotlight on the tragic social conditions of woman's life in the Orient, in changes so swift that health and happiness could not keep up. The Orient looks askance at our religion which permitted the war, and if we want them to know and accept Jesus Christ we must demonstrate His power to redeem not only individuals but society and nations.

Japan is a growing power. Her people have qualities and abilities which will be a worthy contribution to the Kingdom of God. She is the gateway to the Orient. She is the only great Oriental nation which is homogeneous in speech, customs and ideals. In these facts lie the reasons for answering at once Japan's cries for help.

In the World War we fought and worked and gave for an ideal. Can we do less for the ideals of our heavenly kingdom than we did for our earthly country? Too long we have considered our generosity with complacency, and yet most of us have been content to give God merely our overflow. The churches are responding largely. Are we ready as a Y.W.C.A. to do our part of the Christian work in Japan, to do it in the big way commensurate with its importance? To do it in the generous way in harmony with our own rich blessings?

## *Japan's Blue Triangle*

The Young Womens Christian Associations of Japan conducts extensive classes for those who cannot attend schools, teaching Bible, English, Business, Physical Education, and Household Arts and Sciences, assists girls and women away from home, through hostels, recreation and information; trains leaders for Y. W. C. A. work, health work and social service; creates public opinion towards improving woman's conditions, and establishing a basis of Christian understanding

between different nationalities; co-operates with missionaries and Japanese workers in conferences, campaigns, meetings, and making plans; establishes on request associations in schools and in cities, for students and for business and professional, industrial, leisure and foreign groups. The Associations there depend upon secretaries, American and Japanese, volunteer workers, and funds raised partly there and partly here.

There are five city and twenty-seven student associations, with a membership of nearly five thousand. They have fourteen American, one Canadian, and twenty-two Japanese secretaries.





